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ABSTRACT

Serving as a guide for teachers interested in implementing a whole language philosophy within their classrooms and as a resource for teachers who have whole language classrooms, this annotated bibliography presents thorough annotations of 12 selected texts published between 1979 and 1992 encouragement and support for the whole language philosophy. (RS)

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Literacy Research Report No. 9

# ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WHOLE LANGUAGE RESOURCES

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September 1991

**Literacy Research and Reports**

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# ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WHOLE LANGUAGE RESOURCES

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## Annotated Bibliography Of Whole Language Resources

The whole language approach to literacy is based on a philosophy that views reading and writing as active processes. Children in whole language classrooms are involved in using language in functional and purposeful ways with teachers who view children as curious and naturally adept at learning. By contrast, many traditional classrooms break reading and writing down into small components and view learning as the mastery of a set of discrete skills. This environment may actually hinder the literacy development of students.

The following bibliography contains a list of selected texts that encourage and support the whole language philosophy. It is a sampling of the recent plethora of books available on the subject. The included texts can serve as a guide for teachers interested in implementing a whole language philosophy within their classrooms. It can also serve as a resource for teachers who have whole language classrooms and are ready to move ahead in this exciting adventure.

Bettelheim, B., & Zelan, K. (1982). On learning to read: The child's fascination with meaning. NY: Knopf.

This book addresses, in a conversational manner, the journey towards achieving literacy and the different blockades that may be encountered. The authors insightfully address the dilemma of students who fail to become literate as a result of choosing not to do so. The psychological reasoning and negative experiences that lead students to this decision are discussed. The book provides methods for shaping positive attitudes among discouraged students in order to motivate them to read. According to the authors, the impact of the teacher's reaction to reading errors is strong in the shaping process.

Several chapters are devoted to analyzing the effectiveness of textbooks/primers and children's reactions to them. The authors take a careful look at the treatment of literature in textbooks, discussing the importance of realistic language. Students who read watered-down texts frequently

reverse words (was for saw). Their errors often reflect a lack of interest and are not indicative of a reading disability. Students' personal reasons for making these errors should be the focus of instruction rather than additional tedious text exercises.

Butler, A., & Turbill, J. (1984). Towards a reading-writing classroom. New South Wales, Australia: Primary English Teaching Association (Distributed by Heinemann).

Background on the theories of reading and writing integration are presented with an explanation of how to put them into practice. Theories include Brian Cambourne's initial seven conditions of language learning. The first five conditions are the same as those described in Coping with Chaos which Turbill and Cambourne wrote in 1988. The sixth condition is employment, combining the "practice" and "engagement" conditions. The seventh condition is feedback, rather than "response." The authors relate these conditions to the development of the other language arts, emphasizing their integration. A process-conference approach is described in which reading and writing, as well as conferencing, are highlighted. The situations that students experience before, during, and after reading and writing are described.

The "how" and "what" of theory implementation are explained in two of the three sections of the book. "How" is answered with more emphasis on process than product. Students must take responsibility for their own learning. Adequate time must be allotted for their experiences. Several beneficial descriptions of teachers' approaches to using these and other methodologies are provided. The "what" section includes numerous exciting suggestions for classroom instruction. Activities such as sentence strips, word banks, big books, skinny books, and Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR) are included. Publishing and sharing of reading/writing is encouraged, as is building connections between the two areas. According to the authors, critical evaluation of the writer's own writing benefits the writer's development.

Cambourne, B., & Turbill, J. (1988). Coping with chaos. New South Wales, Australia: Primary English Teaching Association (Distributed by Heinemann).

The details of process writing are explained in this realistic book, focusing on the integration of language arts instruction. Donald Graves' impact on Australian education is revealed with his introduction of the process approach. Cambourne sets the scene by citing a woman's reaction to a seminar he presented on the subject: "It looks like unstructured, uncoordinated, unmanageable chaos. The kids are all over the place." This common initial perception is clarified by the extremely positive impact that the whole language philosophy has on students' learning. Cambourne first identifies a set of conditions common to whole language classrooms which he developed from a study conducted in seven kindergartens. These conditions are immersion, demonstration, expectations, responsibility, approximation, practice, engagement, and response. They are explained with insightful detailed "instructions" for teachers as to their impact on learning. Cambourne and Turbill include comprehensive case studies of students' acquisition of writing skills, providing more support of Cambourne's conditions.

Many direct suggestions for classroom implementation are provided. The impact of environmental print is stressed. Unconventional/temporary spelling strategies are explained in great detail with supportive research by C. Bouffler. Repetition of reading/writing and peer interaction/tutoring are also highlighted as significant instructional approaches. Abundant samples of children's drawings and writings supplement the text.

Clay, M. M. (1982). What did I write? Beginning writing behaviour. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This useful, to-the-point book is organized into eight chapters detailing many principles associated with early writing development. Numerous color and black-and-white samples of children's writing expression fill every double page spread. Clay discusses the child's natural urge to create and

discourages the use of rigid instruction in handwriting. She highlights children's individual differences as learners and disparages the use of age norms for making instructional decisions.

In her writing, Clay encourages teachers to sharpen their observational skills in order to identify children's genuine efforts at literacy. The relationship between early writing and early reading is discussed. Detailed information is provided on symbol representation (the alphabet, punctuation, etc.) and the messages that are inherent in children's early codes. The final chapter ties all principles together, linking them to the reading process.

Goodman, K. S., Goodman, Y. M., & Hood, W. J. (Eds.). (1989). The whole language evaluation book. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

A most difficult aspect of implementing a holistic philosophy is evaluating student performance. In this book, the authors present strategies on how to address this problem. Each chapter is written by a different author with a different perspective and set of circumstances. The overall message urges teachers to approach evaluation as part of an ongoing process. Record keeping, diverse observation, portfolio assessment, and checklists are vital tools to achieve this goal. Student self-evaluation should also be included in the assessment process. Teachers' interactions with students, including the physical arrangement of the room, are discussed. Some of the authors address multi-ethnic situations and evaluation of second language growth. Specific guidelines for implementation such as meeting district requirements and facing skeptical parents are addressed. Approximately one-half of the text deals with whole language at the junior high, high school, and adult education levels.

According to the authors, the greatest barrier in overcoming the assessment dilemma is the teacher's attitude. If the teacher is inflexible and feels assessment to be an impossible task, it will be. The suggestions provided are diverse and very helpful.

Graves, D. H. (1990). The reading/writing teacher's companion: Discover your own literacy. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This is the third of five books in the Companion series. The others include Investigate Nonfiction, Experiment with Fiction, Build a Literate Classroom, and Explore Poetry. In Discover Your Own Literacy, Graves provides assertive advice for teachers who need to develop their own language arts skills before implementing a whole language philosophy in their classrooms. Graves targets the importance of teachers becoming active models with literacy in order to create a rich, literate classroom environment.

Teachers must be good listeners and must value writing as a process. Graves suggests that teachers examine their own learning and teaching strategies and share their experiences with their students. In addition, he urges teachers to read aloud and to analyze their voice patterns as they do so. According to Graves, teachers should share their reading experiences with others. Above all, he cites teacher willingness to learn new information and techniques as crucial for achieving evolving literacy.

Graves also suggests ways to implement new outlooks in the classroom through using process skills, thematic units, and integrated instruction of the language arts as major elements of instruction. He recommends that teachers should abolish reading groups entirely and allow students to read freely. Journals and friendly letters should be in abundance. Numerous actual samples are included in the text. Students must also develop listening skills as well as the ability to determine when not to listen.

Graves, D. H. (1983). Writing: Teachers and children at work. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Viewing writing as a process rather than as a means to acquire a product is the focus of this pivotal text. The book provides the basic information used to launch several other exemplary process-oriented works, including those by Brian Cambourne and Andrea Butler. Graves provides a

large number of alternative instructional approaches for many literacy theories. Most ideas are presented by appropriateness for grade levels. The text is organized into five major categories/chapters, encompassing the teaching of the writing process, conferencing, skill acquisition, children's development as writers, and documentation of children's development. Each chapter is concluded with a question and answer section.

The teacher's outlook and initial methodology in the writing process is addressed first. According to Graves, teachers should foster the child's urge to want to create and share. Writing and teaching must both be viewed as crafts: "the process of shaping material toward an end." Students should be given responsibility for their own learning. Teachers should write with students, allowing their own difficulties with writing to be visible. Publication and sharing are two of the main purposes of writing. Graves also includes helpful instructions for homemade book-binding.

The author provides ideas for conferencing with students by including many samples of actual dialogue, but not in a prescriptive format. Recording of conferences can track student development over time. Suggestions for the physical layout of the conference are also included.

According to Graves, children's acquisition of skills should be put "in its place." The aesthetic development of handwriting is explained, but is not considered to be nearly as important as the message conveyed when writing. The developmental spelling stages are described. Inventive spelling is also something to be fostered. Graves provides in-depth suggestions for instruction of slower learners.

Children's development as writers and the documentation of that development are highlighted. Observations should be recorded, and most documentation should be shared with administrators and parents. Teachers should remember that, "Writing is a highly idiosyncratic process that varies from day to day. Variance is the norm, not the exception."

Heald-Taylor, G. (1989). The administrator's guide to whole language. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen.

This basic comprehensive introduction to whole language is geared toward elementary principals and is particularly recommended for those who are skeptical of whole language. Dozens of short, concise paragraphs summarize the various strategies used in a holistic classroom. Thorough background information is provided about the whole language philosophy, documented with brief research references. A comparison of the different facets of both the whole language and skills approaches to instruction reveals the advantages and disadvantages of each. The role of the principal in this transition is explained, encouraging him/her to be the instructional leader.

Very little information, however, is given on the actual transition from traditional to whole language classrooms. Heald-Taylor answers common questions asked about whole language philosophy, literature-based programs, dictated stories, and reading and writing as processes. Many appropriate checklists for assessment are provided. The author also evaluates basal text series which publishers claim center on whole language instruction. Most importantly, evaluation in the whole language classroom is discussed. Standardized tests are described as inappropriate means of assessment for the whole language classroom and countless alternate methods of evaluation are suggested. The Whole Language Behavior Inventory is included with different versions for different grade levels. A comprehensive reference list of whole language professional books, listed by area of language arts, is also provided.

Holdaway, D. (1979). The foundations of literacy. Sydney, Australia: Ashton Scholastic (Distributed by Heinemann).

Although Holdaway tends to use rather technical language and a somewhat unclear organizational pattern, this book has been credited with revolutionizing many aspects of reading and writing instruction. Holdaway states that no totally literate societies exist and suggests that measures

should be taken to ensure and encourage literacy. Language is synonymous with literacy in Holdaway's opinion, so integration of reading, writing, listening, and speaking is essential.

In this text, Holdaway addresses each of the language arts in relation to overall literacy. Writing instruction is said to be tedious because it habitually limits freedom of expression. According to Holdaway, the concepts of "reading readiness" lead to "pre-reading skills" which inhibit previously literacy-ready children.

According to the author, the oral tradition of storytelling and listening has been lost and must be recovered. Holdaway discusses emergent literacy as including personal excitement and motivation, deep semantic processing, situational language, and a strong emphasis on the process, not the product.

Developmental stages and appropriate teaching strategies for language arts integration are also introduced. Analysis of literacy and language is discussed in further depth. Other issues discussed include handling parental skepticism, multi-ethnic instruction, and literacy reform.

Huck, C. S., Hepler, S., & Hickman, J. (1987). Children's literature in the elementary school (4th ed.). New York: Holt.

This college textbook appears to contain everything to know about children's literature. Large bibliographic references are provided at the end of each chapter. Comprehensive appendixes include award-winning books and the addresses of many publishers. The heart of the text is divided into three major categories: "Learning about Books and Children," "Knowing Children's Literature," and "Developing a Literature Program." Each of these sections is comprehensive and detailed.

The first section suggests ways to apply personal values to literature and reading. The authors give teachers criteria for evaluating literature in light of children's interests. An extraordinary number of books appropriate for various ages and developmental stages are listed. The history and evolution of literature are also explained.

In the section titled "Knowing Children's Literature," the development of literacy is examined with special focus on the pre-school years. The various art forms in picture books are detailed, supplemented by an eight-page color insert. Black-and-white reproductions from various children's books are interspersed throughout the text. Traditional literature, modern fantasy, poetry, contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, biographies, and informational books are all presented with great detail. Guides for evaluating various categories of books are given.

In "Developing a Literature Program," the authors take the reader through all the necessary steps for developing such a program. Purposes of the literature program, creating the learning environment, sharing readings and writings, integrating all subject areas, and various evaluation methods are presented.

Routman, R. (1991). Invitations: Changing as teachers and learners. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Invitations offers today's educators encouragement and support for putting whole language theory into practice. The author provides her readers with specific strategies for the daily management of a whole language classroom and gives in-depth information on such topics as: becoming a whole language teacher; shared reading and writing across the grade levels; curriculum; the importance of teacher support groups; evaluation strategies; and the application of holistic strategies for the student with learning disabilities.

Also within the text is a blue-page section containing extensive annotated listings of resources for teachers: professional books, journal articles, themed journals, newsletters, and literacy extension resources. A list of recommended children's books delineated by grade level and subject matter completes the annotated bibliography.

This comprehensive resource begins where Transitions, Routman's 1988 publication, left off. In talking about Invitations, Routman stated, "My hope is that reading [this] book will promote some

self-reflection, risk taking, greater understanding of the principles of language learning, and a closer tie-in between theory and practice."

Routman, R. (1988). Transitions: From literature to literacy. Foreword by Butler, A. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This "how-to" book is for "basal-bound" teachers who wish to develop a whole language philosophy, implement it, and evaluate their program. The author uses her personal experiences as a traditional-style teacher to document her shift to an integrated language arts curriculum. The text is down to earth and reassuring for those taking their first holistic steps.

Routman describes the need for active literacy, in which individuals assume responsibility for their own personal growth. The relationship between reading and writing is documented with actual experiences and suggestions for implementation in grades one, two, and three. The application of strategies and classroom management techniques are explained. Routman relates how evaluation should involve process as well as product. In addition, she urges parental communication and involvement as crucial for success.

The last two chapters and appendixes (totaling 100+ pages) are a wealth of reference materials. They include an annotated bibliography of books for teachers and an extensive list of trade books for children listed by grade level.

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